President: I have received notice of an adjournment motion from Mr. James Fletcher.

> "I desire to move the following motion for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance *viz.*, The situation created by the statements made by certain members of the State Congress in their speeches and writings against the Police Force of the State."

As the matter is of public importance and urgent I have no objection to allow the motion to be debated upon if the honourable member thinks it necessary to do so now instead of bringing it during the discussion of the Police Demand. But now that the question has been raised I may say at once that the position of the State in regard to this matter is perfectly clear. The members of the State Congress desired to know if their constitutional agitation in the sense of holding meetings would be prohibited or taken any adverse notice of by Government. The answer of Government was that if they conducted constitutional agitation or conducted meetings like other organisations and members of the public who are entitled to do so, there would be no obstacle or hindrance placed in their way. Then it was that complaints reached Government that in some of their meetings the Police interfered and set up rowdies to obstruct the meetings, to put questions, to dance in the arena and so forth and so on. The matter has been gone into and Government came to the conclusion that the allegations were not supported by adequate evidence. Nevertheless, in order to make the position perfectly clear Government gave specific orders to the Police that no police man and nobody connected with the Police apart from reporters should ever attend any meetings of the State Congress. Interruptions and difficulties continued and the State Congress have not refrained from still persisting in saying that the Police and the Government are at the back of these obstructions. I may mention for the information of the House that these allegations are absolutely unjustifiable and so far as Government are aware they have not only not tried to prevent those meetings but they have given the fullest opportunity for meetings to be held. The fact however is that there is a much larger opposition to the State Congress than it used to be a year or two ago. There are more people who put questions and appear in the guise of State Congress people than before. That is a healthy line to be pursued provided it is kept within bounds. But I am sorry to observe that the demonstrations of both the parties are not kept within bounds. Government are sorry to notice it. More over it will be borne in mind that whereas in the Madras Presidency and in the whole of India especially at this juncture only a few meetings are held, more meetings have been held by the State Congress here within the last one or two months. In fact the number of

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[President.]

meetings held here by the State Congress during the last month has been larger than the meetings held throughout the whole of British India. What has happened is that taking advantage of the promise and license to conduct constitutional agitation, the State Congress are going about from place to place and conducting meetings on every possible or impossible occasion. In fact they went to the Bar Library at Parur and to the local District Court, met the Pleaders and Advocates and insisted on the necessity of starting agitation immediately, of sending State Congress members to the Legislature and appealed to them to join the State Congress. This is a kind of whirlwind which normally Government would not have minded. But it gives the feeling to a large number of people at this time of economic depression that the State Congress is the only organisation which could give relief to the distressed people. As a matter of fact it was reported to me that statements were made that Rs. 10,000 had been collected by the efforts of certain persons for distress relief in Sherthalai. One Mr. Kaithan has written to me that it was the Young Christian Council of Action which collected the Rs. 10,000. Other people say that it was the State Congress that collected the amount. I had to write back to Mr. Kaithan that I did not know of the collection of Rs. 10,000 by anybody. All that I knew was that a few bundles of tapioca sticks were distiributed by the State Congress. Under these circumstances going about and preaching this kind of thing is likely to rouse discontentment among the people who are already hard hit by the economic depression. Government are watching the situation with care and I may assure the honourable members of the House that there is absolutely no idea on the part of the Government to avoid any agitation, but if agitation leads to counter-agitation and unrest among the people or to undesirable repercussions amongst the economically afflicted people, Government will have to reconsider the whole position very seriously.

Mr. James Fletcher: Sir, statements are sedulously and vehemently circulated by members of the State Congress throughout the State. If they are allowed to continue, it would bring about much discontent and disloyalty among the people.

President: Is the honourable member moving the motion?

Mr. James Fletcher: Sir, I am only submitting that if this practice of the State Congress.....

President: I would appeal to the honourable member to try and say what he has got to say during the time of the Police Demand. But if the matter is so important as to necessitate a discussion at present, I should give the honourable member time to speak now.

Mr. James Fletcher: Sir, I shall be satisfied with speaking on this subject at the time of the Police Demand.

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